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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1417
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3465
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2851
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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SUBJECT: Kyrgyz Election: Campaigning Officially Begins

Ref: Bishkek 656

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Three of the six registered candidates held campaign events on June 18, the first day of the campaign season. President Bakiyev opened his campaign with a speech in Talas to about 5,000 government workers -- minus some potential troublemakers, while the opposition UPM released their candidate's platform in front of a tepidly enthusiastic crowd of 200 in Bishkek. Opposition candidate Temir Sariyev campaigned in Jalalabad, and encountered some resistance from local Bakiyev supporters. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Three of the six registered candidates held campaign events on June 18, the first day of the campaign season. There will be no additional candidates: On June 17, the Supreme Court upheld the Central Election Commission's decision that Akbaraly Aitikeev had not met the requirements to register as a presidential candidate.

Bakiyev Opens Campaign at National Site

¶3. (SBU) President Bakiyev opened his campaign in Talas Oblast with a speech to about 5,000 people at the Manas Ordo complex, a massive site that celebrates the epic of Kyrgyz hero Manas. Opposition newspapers reported that most of the attendees were school teachers and government workers bused in for a command performance. A United People's Movement (UPM) spokesperson said that five UPM members, and a number of other people, were arrested as they attempted to enter the site wearing Atambayev shirts. Whether the arrestees have been released or charged is not yet clear.

Curbed Enthusiasm at UPM Sendoff

¶4. (SBU) Embassy observed a June 18 presentation of UPM candidate Atambayev's platform. The event was held at the Social Democrat Party Headquarters, and attracted an audience of about 200. UPM leaders, including Ata Meken leader Omurbek Tekebayev, and Social Democrat MPs Bakyt Beshimov and Roza Otunbayeva gave short speeches. Tekebayev garnered the most applause, ending with the slogan,

"Together we can do it!," but a subsequent attempt by MP Irina Karamushkina to get the crowd to chant the slogan fizzled. Atambayev himself was not present at the meeting. Organizers reported that he was campaigning in Jalalabad Oblast.

15. (SBU) Atambayev's platform criticizes Bakiyev for recreating the system of family rule that characterized previous President Akayev's administration, and promises a new system of government with strong controls on corruption and executive authority.

Some Pushback on Sariyev Campaign

16. (SBU) According to a contact in the Temir Sariyev campaign, Sariyev elected to open his campaign in the southern Jalalabad Oblast, an area generally considered to be broadly supportive of President Bakiyev. Sariyev then plans to move on to Batken Oblast. The contact reported that the campaign is not facing "substantial impediments," but they have not yet been allowed to rent billboards, and some of their campaign workers in Jalalabad have been threatened, leading to one resignation.

Comment

17. (SBU) With the campaign having officially started, we will now see how well-prepared the candidates are for the campaign and how extensively administrative resources are deployed for the benefit of incumbent President Bakiyev. Embassy will continue to monitor and report developments.

LITZENBERGER